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S E C R E T SECTION 01 OF 03 CHENGDU 000147

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TAGS: MCAP PHUM PGOV CH

SUBJECT: SW CHINA: A TIBETAN PAP OFFICER SPEAKS POSITIVELY OF POLICE CAREER, IMPROVED WORKING CONDITIONS

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REASON: 1.4 (a), (b), (d)

¶1. (S/NF) Summary: A young Tibetan People's Armed Police (PAP) graduate of a nationalities university, leads a unit of 28 ethnic Han Chinese primary school graduates in Ngari (Ari) Prefecture in the western part of the Tibetan Autonomous Region (TAR). Tibetans in this remote area commonly display the Dalai Lama's picture, which the Tibetan PAP unit leader overlooks and his ethnic Han troops do not recognize. Tibetans in remote villages, often led by their local traditional healer, have little idea about the outside world or the Chinese government, although news of the disturbances in Lhasa and other Tibetan regions has made some now begin to resent the PAP. The young PAP officer says that the PAP now feeds and houses its soldiers in the TAR much better than it did just two years ago, forbids leaders from physically abusing soldiers, and tolerates religious articles worn discreetly. This still-religious Tibetan looks forward to a career in the PAP. The new tolerance of religious articles often worn by Tibetans on PAP soldiers and the PAP's willingness to put a Tibetan in charge of unit of 28 ethnic Han recruits is an example of how, given more tolerant policies, Hans and Tibetans can work together as long as China does not, as it often does in its minority policies, "drop a big rock on its own foot." End Summary.

A Young Tibetan People's Armed Police Officer Tells His Story

¶2. (S/NF) The ethnic Tibetan PAP unit leader, in his mid twenties, is stationed in Ngari (Ari) Prefecture in western TAR, not far from Xinjiang and China's border with Indian-controlled Kashmir, discussed with Consulate General Chengdu his impressions of life in the People's Armed Police. This leader of a small, ethnic Tibetan PAP unit is from a poor Tibetan family living in a Tibetan region outside the TAR. After graduating several years ago from one of China's nationalities universities, he had difficulties finding a job and was eventually hired by the PAP in the TAR. The Tibetan officer is now a PAP company commander ("lian Zhang") who leads 28 PAP soldiers in a county-level PAP unit. (Note: A PAP "lian Zhang" typically leads about 30 soldiers, while a People's Liberation Army (PLA) "lian Zhang" leads about 100 soldiers. Organizationally, this P is under the TAR-level "zongdui," below which is the Prefectural level "zhidui." Below the "zhidui," is the county-level "zhongdui." One other difference between the PAP and PLA is that the smallest four unit sizes in the PAP, going from smaller to larger, are: "ban," "pai," "zhongdui" and "dadui;" in the PLA, the corresponding unit sizes are: "ban,"

"pai," "lian," "ying." End note.)

Training Humane Except in Xinjiang

¶3. (S/NF) This young Tibetan police officer's training included a year of physical training in Shaanxi Province where he added a lot of muscle, a one-month internship with a PAP unit in Zhengzhou, Henan, and two months of classroom training -- do's and don'ts for PAP and theory -- in Shanghai. The PAP commented that his training has been difficult, but humane. He said that over the last two years, in a policy change, the PAP ordered that unit leaders no longer physically abuse their soldiers. The PAP commented that one of his Tibetan colleagues resigned over the training he underwent in a unit in Kashgar, Xinjiang. That former colleague said that PAP were using dead bodies in training, including sleeping with dead bodies, handling blood, and seeing dismembered body parts, so that they would be psychologically prepared should they be involved in a violent incident. This training was too disturbing, so his Tibetan friend resigned from the PAP.

¶4. (S/NF) The PAP said that he understand that in ethnic Han areas of China, at the "lianzhang" level and at the next higher level --"yingzhang" -- in the PAP, all the PAP have at least bachelor's degrees and some have master's degrees. Educational standards are lower among PAP lianzhang in the TAR than in eastern China, but many in the TAR, like this Tibetan PAP, have a bachelor's degree. The soldiers in his PAP unit enlist for 4-5 years. The Tibetan PAP officer, however, wants to make his career in the PAP, and hopes after his PAP service is over to become the political director of a county in western TAR. His monthly salary is now RMB 5500 (USD 800), which is an attractive salary for a recent college graduate.

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Assigned to Western TAR for the Past Two and One Half Years

¶5. (S/NF) The Tibetan PAP leads 28 ethnic Han Chinese in a small unit assigned to Ngari Prefecture in western TAR. Part of their responsibility has been to caution ethnic Tibetan Khampas in the Gerze (Gaize in pinyin) area (some from Chamdo in eastern TAR and some from Ganzi in Sichuan Province), a center of gun trafficking (both rifles and pistols), against getting involved in the trafficking of weapons) between the TAR, and Kashgar in Xinjiang. Some of the weapons, he said, are rumored to be coming in from Nepal, but the PAP has no proof of this. Some of these weapons are rifles used in the Gerze area to hunt tigers and other animals for their skins. These activities are less common now since demand dropped sharply a few years ago after the Dalai Lama ordered that killing animals for their fur was against their religion. [Comment: Nearly all Tibetans complied with the Dalai Lama's order. Chinese government officials in big media events often try to force Tibetan entertainers, over their protests, to wear animal skins, apparently so that they will be seen as taking a public anti-Dalai Lama position. End comment.] The Tibetan PAP's unit has been stationed in three different areas, including near Gar (Ge'er in pinyin), about 100 kilometers east of the southern end of the China's border with Indian-controlled Kashmir. The Tibetan PAP commented that an airport now under construction near Gar would be useful to the PAP.

¶6. (S/NF) This 25-year old Tibetan PAP gets 90 vacation days a

year, although the 2008 unrest in Tibetan areas cost the PAP their vacations. Still religious, he has been visiting Buddhist religious sites during his vacation. He commented that the PAP previously objected to PAP wearing religious objects, but now this is permitted as long as the PAP otherwise follow regulations. He added that during his two and a half years in western TAR, housing and rations have improved considerably, with more vegetables and now Internet access. [Comment: One Chengdu Tibetan has observed that PAP on the Tibetan plateau used to be skinny, but now they look much better fed. End comment.]

¶ 7. (S/NF) The Tibetan PAP leader is the only Tibetan and only Tibetan language speaker in his unit. In their operations, the Tibetan PAP said, he often comes across pictures of the Dalai Lama openly displayed in Tibetan homes. He ignores the photos and his ethnic Han troops, who are just elementary school graduates, have never seen a picture of the Dalai Lama, and so do not recognize him. The Tibetan PAP said for these Tibetans the Dalai Lama is purely a religious leader and they do not care about government or politics. People in remote villages do not hide their Dalai Lama pictures because they do not think there is anything wrong with the pictures, and have not been told that they should not display them.

Traditional Tibetan Healers are Often Village Leaders

¶ 8. (S/NF) The Tibetan PAP said that when they have to work with villagers, they often seek out a healer skilled in traditional Tibetan medicine since these people are very influential. These people often have not had formal training, but learned their skills from family members as part of a family tradition. Sometimes medical workers sent by the government to staff a clinic have this same position of influence. Recently, the PAP unit leader said, the Chinese government has increasing used the influence of these local leaders for government purposes. These people have little or no knowledge of foreign countries or even of China, although this is changing now. The PAP have not been disliked by local people in remote villages. Now, however, since news has reached them of disturbances in Lhasa and other Tibetan areas, some local people now dislike the PAP, although relations with local people are still fairly smooth.

Comment: A Trusted Tibetan Looks Forwards to a Career with the PAP

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¶ 9. (S/NF) Over the past year, relations between ethnic Tibetan and Han cadres in the TAR and Tibetan areas of China have deteriorated sharply (reftel). For Party and Government, there is already a rising generation of ethnic Han who have grown up on the Qinghai-Tibet plateau, some of whom speak Tibetan. For military units, especially those operating in rural regions where the population is overwhelmingly Tibetan, the services of ethnic Tibetans are still indispensable. The new tolerance of religious articles often worn by Tibetans on PAP soldiers and the PAP's willingness to put a Tibetan in charge of unit of 28 ethnic Han recruits is an example of how, given more tolerant policies, Hans and Tibetans can work together as long as China does not, as it often does in its minority policies, "drop a big rock on its own foot."

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